# VRS COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FRIDAY, JUNE 28, 2013 - 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

WOODBURY VRS OFFICE / HUDSON CONFERENCE ROOM

## **SESSION NOTES:**

## **Committee Objective**

The purpose of the VRS Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee is to provide strategic advice and consultation to DEED/VRS on topics and issues affecting the mutual provision of DEED/VRS and CRP/LUV services to Minnesotans with disabilities. Our efforts to understand issues and to work collaboratively will build and nurture the capacity of Minnesota's rehabilitation community to advance the employment, independent living and community integration of Minnesotans with disabilities.

Specifically, the VRS Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee will:

- Represent the perspectives and interests of CRP/LUVs in advancing rehabilitation and employment issues while fostering dialogue and engagement on critical issues throughout the greater rehabilitation community
- Provide strategic level advice and consultation to DEED/VRS on matters affecting CRP/LUVs
- Identify key topics and issues affecting CRP/LUVs and DEED/VRS
- Consider input from subject matter experts in issues affecting economic development, state demographics / population trends, and promising practices
- Engage in active reflection, spirited discussion and strategic dialogue on critical topics affecting CRP/LUVs and DEED/VRS services to persons with disabilities in Minnesota
- Provide a forum for the review and discussion of critical VRS and CRP service delivery topics including, but not limited to: current service delivery practices; new and emerging service needs; identifying best practices; and the consideration of statewide service needs and resources
- Promote innovative service practices to accelerate the adoption of best practices at a systems level that fosters equitable access to quality services on a statewide basis

**2013 Community Partner Members** (listed alphabetically): Becky Bazzarre, Laura Bealey, Gil Bessard, Steve Brink, Heather Deutschlaender, Mike Harper, Dan Meyers, Julie Peterschick, Rachel Praught, Lori Sterner/Amanda Jensen-Stahl, Sara Sundeen, and Leslie Swartling

VRS Members: Becky Johnson, Peg Killen, Chris McVey, Roland Root, Dee Torgerson,

and Jeri Werner

Sponsor: Kim Peck, VRS Director

**Co-leaders:** Chris McVey, David Sherwood-Gabrielson and Jan Thompson

Facilitator: Holly Johnson

2013 Schedule: Jan 25, Feb 22, Apr 26, Jun 28, Sep 27, Oct 25, and Dec 6.

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# June 28, 2013 Session Objectives:

- \* Provide a conduit for sharing relevant, important and timely updates and information for the benefit of vocational rehabilitation community and consumers
- \* Continue the strategic dialogue regarding the DISCOVERY Process with a specific focus on the developmental challenges of implementing the model
- \* Provide an introductory overview of Minnesota's Centers for Independent Living and the VR/IL Partnership within the overall vocational rehabilitation services system

June 2013 Attendees (*listed alphabetically*): Becky Bazzarre, Laura Bealey, Gil Bessard, Heather Deutschlaender, Mike Harper, Amanda Jensen-Stahl, Becky Johnson, Peg Killen, Dan Meyers, Chris McVey, Kim Peck, Julie Peterschick, Rachel Praught, Roland Root, David Sherwood-Gabrielson, Sara Sundeen, Leslie Swartling, Jan Thompson and Dee Torgerson **Not in attendance:** Steve Brink and Jeri Werner

Facilitator: Holly Johnson

# **Agenda Topics:**

- \* Welcome / Overview
- ★ Vocational Rehabilitation Community Topics
- ★ Strategic Dialogue: Continuation of DISCOVERY Process Development
- Strategic Partners: Introduction to MN Centers for Independent Living and the VR/IL Partnership
- ★ Wrap Up/Adjourn

## **Meeting Highlights:**

- The committee discussed observations and challenges related to the implementation of the DISCOVERY Process and its implications for Minnesota's rehabilitation community
- The committee received an overview of the history and present day role of Minnesota Centers for Independent Living as a strategic partner in the greater vocational rehabilitation services community

## **Next Steps:**

- DOCUMENT SESSION NOTES: Documentation and communication of session notes for key audiences including committee, VRS organization and CRP partners.
- DISCOVERY IN MINNESOTA:
  - VRS will continue to support CRP capacity development to provide DISCOVERY services as well as efforts to make VRS vocational counselors aware of DISCOVERY as a service option.
  - Gil Bessard will contact Bob Niemiec, Senior Consultant with Griffin-Hammis Associates, LLC to check on potential additional Minnesota training options
- SEPTEMBER VR COMMUNITY SUCCESS STORY Sara Sundeen will provide the September story.
- NEXT MEETING: Next meeting is Friday, September 27<sup>th</sup>.

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# Welcome and Opening

Committee co-chair Chris McVey introduced and welcomed new member Amanda Jensen-Stahl of Goodwill EasterSeals. Amanda will be completing the CRP member term for departed colleague Lori Sterner.

# **Vocational Rehabilitation Community Topics**

## CRP updates:

- Rachel Praught Functional Industries
  - Rachel attended a three day DISCOVERY training and said that Functional has recently received its first referral for DISCOVERY services.
  - Rachel attended the recent SRC Public Forum on the Olmstead Decision and Minnesota's Subcabinet work. She said she was proud to have VRS Kim Peck on the Subcabinet and representing the vocational rehabilitation community at the forum.
- Dan Meyers Opportunity Partners
  - Opportunity Partners has selected Henry Blissenbach as its new CEO.
     Mr. Blissenbach served on the Board of Directors has been associated with Opportunity Partners since 1989.
  - Dan also provided a Walgreens REDI program update.
- Mike Harper RISE, Inc.
  - Robert Reedy is currently compiling the labor market placement study results.
  - RISE Inc. received an EE grant to support reentry services for people returning into communities from prison. Initial results are very positive with 11 of 17 participants in two communities placed and receiving an average of \$10/hr. Participants are ex-offenders with an average of 4.5 years in prison.
  - RISE recently began a new lawn mowing service which is off to a good start.
     Mike acknowledged the great support and partnership with Northern
     Hydraulics who provided a 50% discount on the service equipment for the new venture.
- Amanda Jensen-Stahl Goodwill Easter Seals
  - o Goodwill Easter Seals is undergoing some organizational restructuring.
  - Amanda said they are excited to be awarded a \$1M grant for re-entry training. They are partnering with many organizations on the effort which begins July 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Julie Peterschick Productive Alternatives, Inc.
  - Julie reported that all placement staff at Productive Alternatives have completed DISCOVERY training.

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## Laura Bealey - MRCI-Mankato

- MRCI hosted the South Central Partnership meeting.
- MRCI is breaking ground on a new 35,000 sq ft DTH building that will have capacity for 120 people. The new center is scheduled to open February 2014.
- The new transition youth program 'Bridge to the Future' training is completing its first summer.
- Laura said MRCI's candy business is expanding and now includes major retail customers HyVee, Menards, and Holiday Stores.
- MRCI welcomed new CFO Jeff Call.
- New Business Development Managers have been actively inviting the top leaders from various businesses to MRCI to see program services

## Sara Sundeen - Minnesota Career Solutions

 Sara invited everyone to a special full day Sales Training event on September 23<sup>rd</sup>. Guest speaker will be Janet Fiore, the CEO of The Sierra Group, Inc., a national consultancy with a mission of reversing the high unemployment rate for people with disabilities in America. Contact Sara for more information

#### Gil Bessard - Tasks Unlimited

- o Tasks Unlimited has added a seniors program in St Louis Park.
- They are expanding their event planning business in and with the local Chamber of Commerce.
- Gil shared a lead on a Cambridge opportunity that Tasks Unlimited is unable to fill and invited any interested CRPs to contact him if they had capacity/interest.

#### Heather Deutschlander - ProAct

ProAct is conducting First Aid/CPR training.

#### Leslie Swartling - WORC

- Leslie said staff are undergoing CARF training in anticipation of their April/May 2014 CARF survey.
- WORC is on target to open their new commercial laundry on August 1<sup>st</sup>.

#### ❖ DEED/VRS updates:

The transition between state fiscal years involves substantial administrative work related to funding issues, appropriations and contracts. Specific to the Minnesota Employment Center for Persons Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (MEC) there is a gap between the end of the SFY13 funding period and the next application/selection period for the next round of potential funding under the competitive grant pool. VRS has been working with Rise, Inc., and Lifetrack in an effort to find resources for bridging strategies to continue MEC programming until the competitive grant applications are reviewed and funding decisions have been made.

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FRIDAY, JUNE 28, 2013 – 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

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- On June 17<sup>th</sup> the VRS State Rehabilitation Council (General) in partnership the State Rehabilitation Council (Blind), the Statewide Independent Living Council and the Minnesota State Council on Disability hosted a public forum, "Minnesota Olmstead Plan: Freedom of Choice and Opportunity for People with Disabilities". The Governor appointed subcabinet on Olmstead provided draft recommendations and asked for public input to be considered as Minnesota continues to draft and refine a final Olmstead Plan that will that will be presented to the District Court on November 1<sup>st</sup>. Cynthia Bauerly, DEED Deputy Commissioner for Work Force programs, is the DEED member of the Governor's Olmstead Subcabinet and Kim Peck, along with Dick Strong (SSB), are co-leads for the DEED/VRS-SSB work group on Olmstead. Kim said she anticipates that Minnesota's Olmstead Plan will have significant implications for the entire Minnesota system serving people with disabilities. She encouraged members and partners to review the draft recommendations and provide their input into the process.
- VRS Field Director Jan Thompson shared that Alyssa Klein, VRS Transition Specialist recently convened a statewide meeting with counselors focused on developing strategic priorities for serving Transition Youth. Transition Youth continues to gather greater attention from all levels of government - local, state and federal.
- Northern Regional Manager Roland Root is currently interviewing candidates to fill the RAM position vacancy created by Ken Norstrud's retirement on June 1<sup>st</sup>. Ken managed VRS services across Cambridge, Cloquet, Grand Rapids, North Branch and Colerain areas.
- VRS Strategic Initiatives Director Chris McVey announced that preparations are underway to launch the Next Generation Placement pilots one in each VRS region: Northern, Metro, and Southern. She plans to bring the full pilot participants in each region together for orientation and launch training sometime in late summer/early fall. The pilots will focus on the transformational process changes rooted in a true team approach. During the pilot phase, PBA financial milestones and payments will remain the same. Stay tuned for more communication regarding the Next Generation Placement pilots as it gets closer to launch.

Committee member Dan Meyers provided the June community partnership success story: Dan shared the story of working with a challenging consumer who was focused on 'Floor care' as his vocational objective with several conditions. With lots of persistence he was able to find a job at a hotel in Burnsville. He has now been employed at the hotel for three years - a major success! He has been coached through numerous new managers during that time. Dan said one of the highlights is an annual lunch with the consumer to celebrate his ongoing employment. His employer has joined in this annual celebration and provides him a certificate. Dan said this is a real success story because the team and the consumer never gave up and it finally happened on the second PBA! The consumer is happily and gainfully employed in floor care and his employer is pleased too.

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FRIDAY, JUNE 28, 2013 – 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM
WOODBURY VRS OFFICE / HUDSON CONFERENCE ROOM

## Strategic Dialogue: Continuation of DISCOVERY Process Development

The remainder of the morning session was focused on gathering observations and experiences related to the DISCOVERY service development. Advisory Committee Members were joined by VRS Specialists Team: Abbie Wells-Herzog (VRS Autism Specialist), Alyssa Klein (VRS Transition Specialist) and Anne Paulson (VRS Community Partnerships Specialist) who are working with the VRS DISCOVERY Project. Abbie is the manager of this service development project and David Sherwood-Gabrielson and Jan Thompson are co-sponsors for the project. For purposes of developing and incorporating the DISCOVERY as a service option within VRS, the overall DISCOVERY process is organized in two process components: (1) the assessment process and (2) the PBA (customized employment placement) process.

### Discussion Question #1: What are your experiences with DISCOVERY so far?

- CRP Member: we wonder if there be enough referrals to merit hiring the staff; we must consider the financial costs of training and hiring additional specialized staff.
- CRP Member: we have had to turn referrals away due to full capacity; advised other CRPs to let local counselors know that you are offering DISCOVERY services; has observed that counties have more intensive needs/longer timeframes.
- CRP Member: VRS has done a good job with providing access to staff that are knowledgeable with DISCOVERY.
- CRP Member: my counselors have been asking about DISCOVERY and they are looking for outcomes. There doesn't seem to be much data out there on outcomes.
  - Canada uses DISCOVERY Process widely, however still no known body of research on outcomes
- CRP Member: question asked regarding a hire that was made based on an informational interview - is that a good decision?
  - Abbey Wells-Herzog: ultimately it comes down to the individual person or their guardian; you have to weigh if it's a good fit.
- VRS Abbey Wells-Herzog: the number of people on the spectrum and transition youth with executive function challenges is increasing - transition counselors and other counselors who aren't seeing more traditional approaches working are among those who are getting on board with DISCOVERY.
- VRS Peg Killian: our VRS office is seeing more counselors moving toward considering the DISCOVERY services among other options earlier in the process based on what they think will work best for the individual.

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FRIDAY, JUNE 28, 2013 – 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM
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Discussion Question #2: What are the ongoing training and technical assistance needs that the CRP community has around DISCOVERY in order to effectively deliver DISCOVERY services?

- CRP member: it would be helpful to know if training will be offered / made available at regular intervals.
- o Abbey Wells-Herzog: There are a few options we're aware of:
  - 2.5 day training is offered by Bob Neimiec, Senior Consultant at Griffin-Hammis Associates and was provided through MNTAC. Received good reviews from participants.
  - A 6 hour online training is available from Griffin-Hammis.
  - 4 hour overview training is offered by Megan Zeilinger, Train Another Way LLC, that may be helpful for providing an overview for organizations and supervisory staff.
  - VRS is looking into options for going to deeper level. One of the biggest challenges we're seeing so far is people not following the 'staging record'.
- CRP member: How about creating a DISCOVERY practitioners' circle to share best practices and help each other with troubleshooting?

VRS currently has eight - soon to be 10 CRPs - with professional and technical contracts to provide DISCOVERY assessment and PBA. The committee discussed ongoing training access options for community training. Member Gil Bessard offered to inquire with Griffin-Hammis Associates LLC senior consultant Bob Niemiec at an upcoming event they were both planning to attend. See 'Next Steps' on page 2.

The advisory committee also recommended formally communicating the availability of VRS Specialists Abbey Wells-Herzog (VRS Autism Specialist) and Alyssa Klein (VRS Transition Specialist) to provide technical assistance and support to CRPs LUVs as they develop DISCOVERY within their organizations.

The committee discussed the merit of creating community of practice cohorts as we continue efforts to build DISCOVERY service capacity. The committee also agreed to continue/increase the promotion of DISCOVERY as a potential option for VRS counselors to keep in mind as part of their overall 'toolbox'.

Per the VRS mission and value proposition, VRS is charged with the statewide system perspective and responsibility to help providers gain access to training for the level of quality services VRS is contracting them to provide. The committee agreed that with the emergence of DISCOVERY on the local, state and federal scenes, the committee needs to understand the specific training and support needs, and help determine the appropriate role VRS can play in effectively addressing those needs in Minnesota.

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FRIDAY, JUNE 28, 2013 - 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

WOODBURY VRS OFFICE / HUDSON CONFERENCE ROOM

# Strategic Partners: Introduction to Minnesota's Centers for Independent Living and the VR/IL Partnership

#### Guest presenters:

- David Hancox, Executive Director, Metropolitan Council for Independent Living, Inc.
- Roberta Cich, Executive Director, Access North

David Sherwood-Gabrielson began the afternoon meeting with a brief introduction of guest presenters David Hancox and Roberta Cich, as well as an overview of the strategic dialogue objectives for the afternoon. He provided the committee with handouts outlining the Center for Independent Living core and additional service offerings.

Centers for Independent Living receive their statutory authority through Section 705 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Minnesota's Centers for Independent Living receive approximately \$2.2M from the state of Minnesota annually which provides approximately \$22M in savings related to prevention of out of home placements.

The four core services are:

- 1. Individual and Systems Advocacy
- 2. Independent Living Skill Training
- 3. Information and Referral Services
- 4. Peer and Group Support

David Hancox and Roberta Cich provided an overview of the tenants of non-residential centers for independent living. The centers are an important resource to assist people in continuing to live independently within their communities and to prevent out of home placement. There are currently 535 centers located throughout all 50 states. Each center is established as a 501(c)3. Centers for Independent Living serve cross disability and have no age or income restrictions.

Minnesota is by eight centers for independent living as follows:

- 1. Metropolitan Center for Independent Living (MCIL)
- 2. Southeastern Minnesota Center for Independent Living (SEMCIL)
- 3. Independent Lifestyles Inc. Center for Independent Living (ILICIL)
- 4. Access North: Center for Independent Living of Northeastern Minnesota (CILNM)
- 5. Options Resource Center for Independent Living (OPTIONS)
- 6. Freedom Resource Center for Independent Living (FREEDOM)
- 7. Southwestern Center for Independent Living (SWCIL)
- 8. Southern Minnesota Independent Living Enterprises and Services (SMILES)

Note: More information can be found in the 2012 Annual Report of the Minnesota Statewide Independent Living Council.

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FRIDAY, JUNE 28, 2013 - 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

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## The Disability Linkage Line

Roberta Cich also recommended the committee leverage the Disability Linkage Line which can be reached by calling **1.866.333.2466**. The Disability Linkage Line (DLL) is a free, statewide information and referral resource that provides Minnesotans with disabilities and chronic illnesses a single access point for all disability related questions. DLL provides service to the entire state from four locations: St. Paul, Rochester, Bemidji and Brainerd.

A trained resource specialist is available during regular business hours (8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.) to provide one-to-one assistance to help people learn about their options and connect with the supports and services they choose. Inquiries include requests for information and referrals on disability benefits programs, home modifications, assistive technology, personal assistance services, transition services, accessible housing, employment, social activities and disability rights. Minnesota's Disability Linkage Line has become a national model.

For people who prefer looking for resources over the Internet, the Disability Linkage Line is a partner in the statewide resource database found at Minnesotahelp.info.

#### IL/VR Collaboration

In July 2007, Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) asked Minnesota's Centers for Independent Living to work with their local VRS offices to create a strong IL/VR collaboration model for improved consumer services and outcomes. The collaboration makes independent living services available to consumers that are receiving employment and training services through VR.

In September 2012, VRS decided to continue funding for local VRS-IL collaborations through September 30, 2013, using an approach that emphasized the advantages of colocation and that focused Independent Living service delivery exclusively on Vocational Rehabilitation consumers. Providing access to IL services significantly enhances a VR consumer's ability to achieve an employment outcome.

Further, the co-location of CIL staff at workforce centers or VRS offices or, alternately, the benefits of co-location through CIL staff time dedicated to VRS-related services, has strengthened the effectiveness of this partnership.

From October 2011 through September 2012, 1,349 consumers received both VR and IL services through the collaboration. Since October 2011, 283 individuals have exited VR with an employment outcome and 169 have exited without employment. This translates into a rehabilitation rate of 62.6%. For individuals who did not receive IL services during this same period, the rehabilitation rate was 56%.

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FRIDAY, JUNE 28, 2013 – 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

#### WOODBURY VRS OFFICE / HUDSON CONFERENCE ROOM

#### Strategic Goals

The Minnesota Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) has established three strategic goals for Minnesota's independent living system. The goals not only guide the work of the SILC but also serve as a framework by which the successes and accomplishments of the system can be measured and evaluated. The three goals are:

- 1. All Minnesotans with disabilities receive needed services from the current independent living system.
- 2. Minnesota's independent living program operates effectively and efficiently.
- The Minnesota independent living program advances the network of independent living services, advises on independent living issues, including policy development and stable and sufficient resources to serve the needs of Minnesotans with disabilities.

#### **KEY MESSAGES FROM TODAY**

# Important Messages for the Greater Vocational Rehabilitation Community:

- The Supreme Court's Olmstead Decision renews Minnesota's vocational rehabilitation focus and energies in serving those with the most significant disabilities in pursuing their employment and community integration hopes and dreams. The Governor's Olmstead Sub-cabinet is formally charged with developing and submitting a plan for interagency strategies to improve our work and outcomes towards these ends. Now is the time for the entire vocational rehabilitation community to provide their input to help shape Minnesota's response.
- As a statewide advisory committee, we will continue to explore the process, training, and outcomes associated with DISCOVERY process as part of the broad range of methodologies that can be employed in service to vocational rehabilitation consumers. The committee will continue to serve advisory on ground level experiences and lessons so we can accelerate the consistent use of best practices statewide where it makes sense.
- Minnesota's independent living program advances the network of independent living services, advises on independent living issues, including policy development and stable and sufficient resources to serve the needs of Minnesotans with disabilities.
- As a statewide advisory committee, we believe that the more each of the key partners - including CRPs, LUVs, CILs and VRS - who serve people with disabilities can work together, the better the needs of the customers we serve will be met.